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PROTOCOLS

UPDATED SAFETY PROTOCOLS FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD CENTRES

SEPTEMBER 2021

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A. Entry, Pick-up, and ECC Visit Procedures

1. At the Early Childhood Centre (ECC) entrance, every child's temperature must be scanned using handheld or installed thermal technology. Children who arrive by bus must have their temperatures scanned before boarding the bus. Anyone with a fever $\geq 37.5^{\circ}$ C should not be allowed entry.
2. The class teacher must refer children with Covid-19 symptoms such as cough, body aches, fatigue, shortness of breath, sore throat, runny nose, diarrhea, nausea, and headache, to the ECC nurse for further screening as per the Dubai Health Authority (DHA) guidelines. [Click here](#).
3. Teachers, staff, and family members are required to wear face masks at all times. A medical certificate is required for anyone who wishes to apply for a mask exemption permit. [Click here](#).
4. Only one family member or guardian is allowed to enter the ECC facility to drop off or pick up their child.
5. ECCs should implement a staggered entry and exit procedure to eliminate overcrowding and maintain the recommended one metre of physical distance in high traffic areas.
6. To ensure minimal interaction between parents inside the ECC building, ECCs may designate drop-off and pick-up areas. However, children may also be dropped off or picked up in their classrooms. Parents and guardians may not have access to the rest of the ECC.
7. If an area has been designated for pick-up and drop-off, parents and guardians should have a ten-minute time limit there. Masks must be worn at all times.
8. Whenever possible, meetings should take place online. If there is a critical need for an in-person meeting, it must be made by appointment. Parents may attend parent evenings in person as long as other Covid-19 protocols are in place, such as physical distancing and face masks. Virtual attendance should also be offered.
9. Maintenance work or deliveries must not take place during ECC hours. A contact-free process must be in place for items to be picked up or dropped off at the ECC.

B. Health and Safety Officers

10. ECCs must appoint a team of Health and Safety Officers (HSOs) to ensure all health and safety protocols are being adhered to.
11. Roles and responsibilities of this HSO team include (but are not limited to):
 - developing health and safety procedures;
 - monitoring the implementation of these procedures;
 - reporting on vaccination status and the weekly PCR results of unvaccinated internal and outsourced staff and encouraging re-vaccination / booster shots if required;
 - supervising daily and continuous cleaning;
 - training relevant staff on best practices and Dubai Municipality (DM) requirements;
 - conducting all necessary training for children and staff;
 - managing the designated isolation room on the ECC premises;
 - conducting all necessary contact tracing procedures (which include contact tracing, recording of contacts' details and all actions taken in the HASANA system);
 - managing confirmed and suspected cases and emergencies;
 - updating contact and emergency numbers for staff and children;
12. For DHA guidelines on the recommended qualifications and roles of the Health and Safety Officer, [click here](#). [Dubai Municipality](#) provides guidelines on the daily and continuous cleaning and sanitisation requirements for ECC premises. [Click here](#) and [here](#).
13. To ensure the proper handling of potential cases, training must be provided to the relevant health and safety officer and to the attending nurse/ doctor. [Click here](#).



C. Screening & Contingency/Emergency Plan

14. DHA Guidelines on the screening and management of suspected and confirmed cases of Covid-19 must always be followed. [Click here: \(Guidelines for the Management of COVID -19 in Educational, Academic settings, nurseries and ELCs\)](#). These guidelines include:
 - how to manage suspected and confirmed Covid-19 cases amongst visitors, children, teachers and/or staff;
 - contact tracing of positive Covid-19 patients;
 - development and management of the ECC emergency protocols related to Covid-19 emergencies;
 - requirements for the designated isolation room.
15. Sanitisation processes should adhere to DM guidelines. These apply to classrooms, to isolation rooms, and to all areas of the ECC where suspected or known cases of Covid-19 have been present. [Click here: Technical Guidelines for Educational Institutes Compliance \(Governmental, private nurseries, schools, universities\)](#) and [here \(Technical Guidelines for Cleaning & Disinfecting Childcare & Nurseries Premises\)](#).
16. At least one staff member must hold a current certification in pediatric first aid and CPR should be available at all times.



D. Monitoring Attendance and Contact Tracing

17. Staff, guests and/or children who receive a Covid-19 positive PCR test must provide a DHA clearance certificate to return to the classroom.
18. To make contact tracing possible, it is imperative that ECCs maintain current records of staff, guests, members, and children, including names, telephone numbers and visit dates.
19. ECCs must follow contact tracing procedures and provide DHA with all records necessary to trace the contacts of confirmed Covid-19 cases.



E. Hygiene

20. Children, teachers and ECC staff must be encouraged to stay home if unwell.
21. Only companies accredited by Dubai Municipality must be used to disinfect and sanitise ECCs. The list of accredited companies can be found [here](#).
22. The ECC premises must be cleaned and sanitised at the end of each ECC day, in line with DM guidelines. [Click here](#).
23. Common areas and frequently touched surfaces (i.e. toilets, pantry, waiting areas, etc.) must be frequently cleaned and sanitised. For more details, refer to the [Dubai Municipality's cleaning and disinfection guidelines](#).
24. The DM guidelines for the daily disinfection and for terminal disinfection must be followed. [Click here](#).
25. ECCs must have clear guidelines in place for cleaners and for security staff to ensure their safety, including the wearing of masks and gloves. [Click here](#): List of approved professional Use Business to Business "B2B" Biocides.
26. Encourage a strict hand washing regime and adequate hand washing breaks and avoid using sanitisers for children who have the tendency to lick their hands or suck on their fingers. Provide younger children with handwashing assistance.
27. Hand sanitisers must be available throughout the ECC premises, but kept out of reach of young children. Only provide hand sanitisers approved by Dubai Municipality. [Click here: List of approved professional-grade Business to Business Biocides](#).
28. Anyone who enters the ECC must wear a mask and use the hand sanitiser provided at the entrance. Enrolled children are exempted from wearing face masks or any type of face coverings.
29. Anyone entering the premises must immediately wash and/or sanitise hands.
30. Nappy changing areas, and the bathroom usage routine for little children should follow specific guidelines for disinfection and sanitisation as per DM guidelines for child development centers and day care centers.



E. Hygiene

31. Child care providers should wash their hands for at least 20 seconds before and after handling infant bottles prepared either at home or in the facility.
32. For classes that require the removal of shoes, all shoe racks should be placed outside the classroom.
33. Frequently-used electronic devices (tablets, computers, etc.) must be sanitised after each use.
34. Subcontractors hired to provide hygiene and sanitisation services must provide proof of staff training and adherence to the DHA health and safety guidelines and the DM cleaning and sanitisation guidelines. This includes weekly PCR tests for unvaccinated staff.
35. To further minimise the spread of Covid-19, ECCs are encouraged to adopt 'paperless' processes that rely on the effective use of technology.
36. Posters describing effective handwashing techniques must be placed near sinks. Additional material about hygiene must be placed throughout the ECC building and shared with parents.
37. Spaces must be well-ventilated, and whenever possible, should use ventilation units or natural ventilation such as open windows. Refer to DM Guidelines for ventilation criteria. [Click here: Technical Guidelines for Ventilation in School-Classes.](#)
38. Ensure that cleaning services are regular and thorough (i.e. bins must be emptied frequently, etc.).
39. Ensure that all staff and children:
 - Frequently wash their hands with soap and water for 20 seconds and dry thoroughly:
 - Wash their hands upon arrival, before and after eating, and after sneezing or coughing:
 - Avoid touching their mouths, eyes, and noses.
40. Dubai Municipality's standards for waste management, especially contaminated waste, must be followed. [Click here for the guidelines.](#)

F. Restrictions

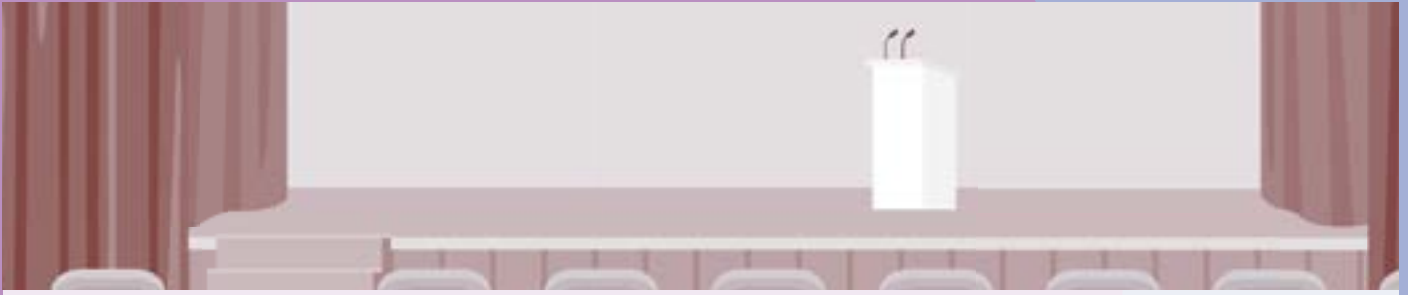
41. All staff and visitors, except those with an approved exemption, must wear masks as soon as they enter the ECC. Non-compliance will lead to denial of entry to the ECC. Masks can be removed when eating.
42. Where there is a specific need for lip reading, a mask worn under a face shield may be pulled down for this specific purpose and for the shortest time possible. The nose and mouth should again be covered by the mask immediately after the learning exercise.
43. Sufficient stocks of masks, gloves, and sanitisers must be available and designated bins must be provided for their disposal.
44. Child registration or enrolment should take place online. If necessary, parents/ guardians can register in person by appointment only. Parents should not visit the ECC during pick-up, drop-off or break times to avoid overcrowding.
45. Parents, guardians, or visitors who go inside the ECC building for any reason should provide proof of vaccination or a negative PCR test taken in the previous 48 hours. This does not apply to parents and guardians who drop off and pick up their children from designated zones outside of the school building.
46. If the ECC is not able to maintain the required physical distancing, then it should take all necessary measures to ensure the health and safety of the ECC community.

G. Set-up / Physical Distancing Arrangements

47. One metre of physical distance is recommended in all common areas, at service desks, and where different groups of children, staff, and visitors mix.
48. Classrooms should have enough space for groups to maintain a physical distance of the recommended one metre per child when possible, especially in Pre-primary / FS1, KG1 / FS2, KG2 / Y1 classrooms .
49. To avoid crowding, the number of children using toilet facilities at any one time should be limited.
50. Use of outside space should be encouraged:
 - for exercise and breaks;
 - for outdoor education, where possible, as this can limit transmission and allow for distance between children and staff;
51. Outdoor equipment should not be used unless it is appropriately cleaned and sanitised after each group of children. One metre of distance is recommended between children.
52. Entry to and exit from staff rooms, offices and pantries should be staggered. Occupancy of pantries should be limited to comply with the recommended one metre of physical distancing.
53. The ECC must develop a set of procedures to handle suspected or confirmed Covid-19 cases, according to [DHA guidelines](#). This includes the creation and management of an age-appropriate isolation room. [Click here for DHA guidelines](#).
54. Pantries may only be used for individual food and drink consumption and one metre of physical distance is recommended. No buffets or other gatherings are allowed.
55. Lockers or cubbies are permitted as long as physical distancing measures are not compromised. Each child should have their own locker. No sharing of lockers is allowed.
56. Markers must be created on the floor to indicate appropriate spacing and one-way flow signs wherever needed (in corridors and staircases).
57. All coffee stations should adhere to the one-metre physical distancing recommendation. Queueing should be avoided.
58. All elevators can be used at maximum capacity, though physical distancing is recommended.
59. Contactless payments should be encouraged, though cash payments are allowed.
60. If ECCs resume swimming and other PE lessons, shower and changing room facilities can be used, provided they are cleaned and sanitised after each group of children has used them.

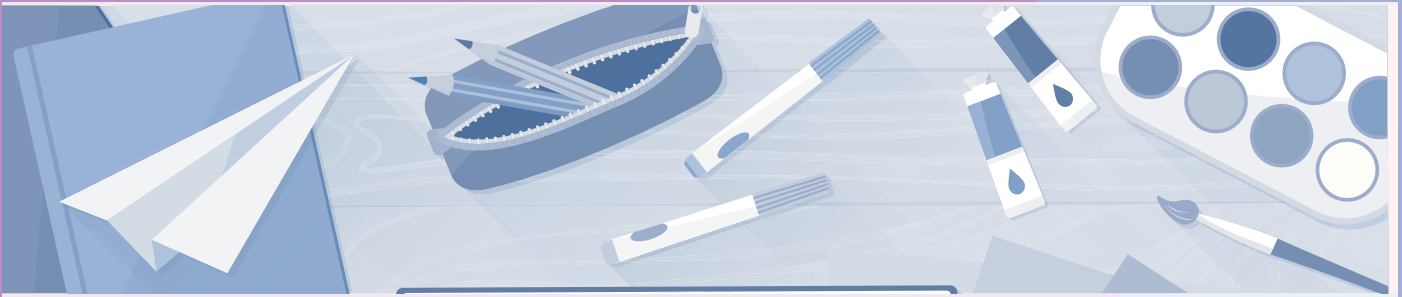
H. Educational Provision

61. The number of children in a class depends on the size of the classroom. The provision for children requires “stable” groups or “bubbles” of 15 or fewer children. This means the same 15 or fewer children are in the same group each day and cannot be accessed by children outside of that group. Child-to-teacher/caregiver ratios must meet the KHDA requirements for these age groups.
62. Cohorts should be kept together where possible.
63. Child care classes for infants and toddlers under the age of 3 should include the same group at all times, and the same child care providers should remain with the same group each day.
64. Children in older cohorts--Prep-primary/FS1, KG1/FS2, KG2/Y1-- can attend lessons outside their homerooms/main classrooms. However, these outside lessons should adhere to staggered entry and exit procedures to avoid overcrowding. Cleaners should be scheduled to clean the space before the next group enters.
65. If children in Pre-primary/FS1, KG1/FS2, KG2/Y1 are seated in a classroom setting, they should have designated, pre-assigned tables and chairs with a recommended one metre of physical distancing between them. Swapping of seats is not allowed.
66. Children older than 3 who have an approved exemption must be provided an alternative means for education (i.e. online provision) until further notice.
67. ECCs should ensure academic provision for children who are unable to attend in-person classes (due to health, quarantine, etc.) provided they are healthy enough to have these lessons.



I. Special Events

68. Special events such as festivals, celebrations, and assemblies can take place within certain parameters. There should be enough space to accommodate all children while following physical distancing recommendations. Interactions between groups of children should be kept to a minimum; entry and exits to such events should be staggered, and event spaces must be cleaned before and after every event.
69. Performances must be designed with an adaptive approach to reduce risk (physical distancing should be maintained).
70. Both ECCs and external sports providers can offer extracurricular activities. Non-sport extracurricular activities will follow the same protocols that are adopted during ECC hours. Sports-focused extra-curricular activities will follow the guidelines of the Dubai Sports Council. [Click here.](#)
71. Trips for children attending Prep-primary/FS1, KG1/FS2, KG2/Y1 are allowed as long as they follow all the basic precautionary measures, such as physical distancing, staggered entry and exit and minimising interactions among groups of children. The venue's capacity must be able to accommodate the number of children with the recommended one metre of physical distance between each.
72. Group activities such sport camps and tournaments should adhere to the guidelines of the Dubai Sports Council. [Click here.](#)
73. For all events and group activities, proper contact tracing procedures must be followed for positive Covid-19 cases.



J. Shared Resources/ Materials

74. Shared materials must be sanitised after every use. Posters explaining the rules for handling shared materials should be placed where appropriate.
75. Use of soft toys and toys with intricate or hard-to-clean parts should be avoided.
76. All equipment in classrooms such as toys, books, scissors, pens, pencils, crayons, arts and crafts materials and messy play resources as well as roleplay and other materials should be sanitised after each use where possible.
77. All classroom items should be immediately removed if sneezed on, coughed on, or put in mouth. Keep a designated, clearly labeled, basket/ container for separating items that have been in children's mouths, sneezed or coughed on. Clean and sanitise prior to returning to the children's area.
78. Children and teachers must bring their own stationery items, devices, or gadgets (laptops, tablets, headphones, etc.). Children must not share stationery. If children need stationery, it must be provided by the teacher and be properly sanitised.
79. Avoid using equipment that requires blowing (musical instruments, whistles, blow-pipes, etc) or encourage parents to supply their child with their own equipment if possible.
80. Teachers should provide soft copies of teaching and review materials and encourage paperless work in class or for homework. Digital handwriting should be accepted for relevant ECC work.
81. Unnecessary material, like carpets, equipment and furniture should be removed from classrooms.
82. Certain types of play sections/areas should be closed (dress up sections, indoor soft play areas, reading corners with soft furniture). Open areas should include furniture and equipment that is easy to clean.
83. Toys and other common resources should not be shared with other groups of children, unless they are washed and sanitised before use by the next group.

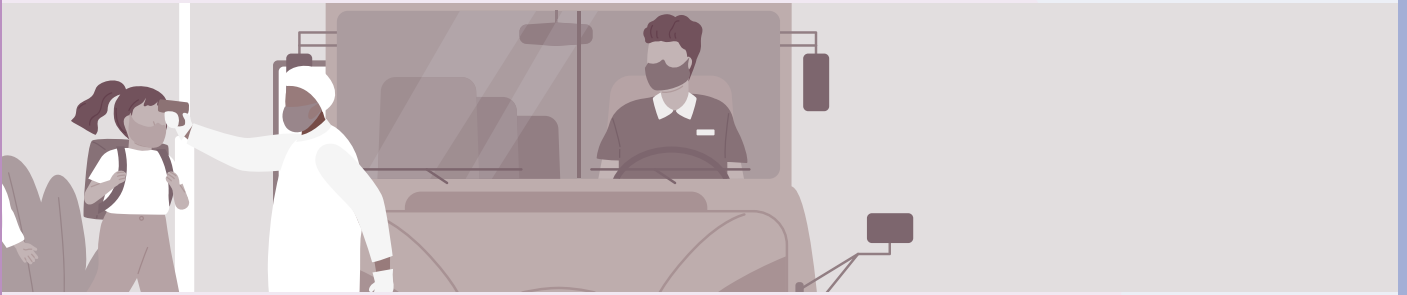
K. Food and Beverages

84. ECCs can provide catering services if the food is pre-packaged and follows Dubai Municipality guidelines related to catering services. Families are encouraged to supply food and beverages for their children that includes cutlery. Teachers should ensure that children do not share food. [Click here for Dubai Municipality guidelines on health and safety protocols for food consumption.](#)
85. If the ECC hosts a café, Dubai Municipality's guidelines for cafes and restaurants must be followed, especially those regarding capacity restrictions, recommended physical distancing, the use of disposable items, hygiene across the venue and all other protocols of relevance. [Click here](#) and [here.](#)
86. One metre of distancing is recommended when eating. Staff should make sure the precautionary measures are followed.
87. Buffets or other forms of meal gatherings are not allowed.
88. Meal breaks should be staggered to ensure the recommended one metre of physical distancing among all children.
89. Pantries can only be used for food and drink consumption provided that the recommended one metre of physical distance is maintained.
90. Vending machines and prepackaged food are allowed, provided they follow necessary Dubai Municipality guidelines for the sector. [Click here.](#)



L. Physical Education

91. For all sports related activities, ECCs must follow the Dubai Sports Council Guidelines. [Click here.](#)
92. Sports facilities should be big enough to ensure appropriate physical distancing for the number of children present. This includes indoor and outdoor sports.
93. Sports activities should be limited to children from the same sports class.
94. Entry and exit to sports facilities must be staggered to maintain the recommended one metre physical distancing.
95. Sports equipment and playgrounds must be sanitised after being used by each group of children.
96. Individual sports can resume in line with Dubai Sports Council guidelines. Group sports must be adapted to minimise contact and risk.
97. When introducing any new sports activity, the ECC must adhere to proper contact tracing procedures.



M. Transportation

98. All ECCs must refer to RTA guidelines for further details on the management of Covid-19 protocols. [Click here.](#)
99. Anyone entering the bus must undergo temperature screening. Anyone with a temperature \geq or greater than 37.5°C should not be allowed on the bus.
100. Bus capacity can increase to 100 percent. If possible, each child should be given a designated, pre-assigned seat.
101. All bus passengers, with the exception of children younger than 6, must wear masks.
102. Bus hygiene must be maintained by following the appropriate sanitisation guidelines. and physical distancing standards. For example, seat belts, arm rests, handles and rails must be sanitised after each use, in accordance with RTA's relevant guidelines for public transportation.
103. Records of all bus passengers must be maintained daily. Absences should also be recorded.
104. For buses using swipe cards for registration, the cards and the swipe machine should be regularly sanitised. The process should be supervised by the bus attendant.
105. Signage must be added inside the bus to guide children in hygienic practices (i.e. respiratory hygiene, waste management, etc.).
106. Adequate waste management and disinfection practices must be followed, especially if children use back seat pockets and bins.
107. Ensure proper ventilation in the vehicle at all times. Avoid recirculating air and encourage the use of windows whenever possible.
108. If a child shows symptoms of Covid-19 while riding the bus, the child is considered a suspected Covid-19 case. Immediately ensure the child is seated one metre or more away from the rest of the children. The bus attendant must immediately inform the health and safety officer (HSO) in-charge at the ECC who must immediately communicate with ECC administration and parents/guardians. If the trip is to take the child home from ECC, the child must be dropped off first. If the trip is to take the child to the ECC from home, the child must be put in the isolation room at ECC and then sent home. Refer to DHA guidelines for more information. [Click here.](#)



N. Communications

109. Ensure that sufficient and accessible training and communication channels keep all staff, parents and children informed of new settings, practices, and hygiene approaches. ECCs must fully comply with all measures and guidelines stated by government regulators.



O. Compliance

110. ECCs must fully comply with all measures and guidelines stated by government regulators.



P. ECC premises (other than classrooms)

111. Prayer rooms must follow the guidelines of the Islamic and Charitable Affairs Department.
112. Science laboratories, training kitchens, art studios, music rooms, and others must implement the following guidelines:
 - Where possible, all spaces should be well ventilated using natural ventilation (opening windows) or ventilation units that meet Dubai Municipality requirements. Refer to DM Guidelines for ventilation criteria. [Click here.](#)
 - Rooms should not be used in full capacity to ensure users maintain the recommended one metre of distance during the class session.
 - Frequently touched areas, surfaces, and equipment must be sanitised after every use.
 - Children should be encouraged to bring in their own equipment whenever possible.
 - Clear guidelines must be set for cleaning staff to ensure they follow the right measures. Refer to DM Guidelines for more information on the measures that need to be taken during cleaning. [Click here](#) and [here.](#)
 - Food prepared during cooking classes must not be shared among children.
113. Libraries must implement the following guidelines:
 - Staggered entry to the library.
 - Adequate cleaning and sanitisation between lessons.
 - Library lessons and reading corners should maintain the recommended one metre of physical distance between children.
 - The librarian and support staff must wear masks and use hand sanitiser after each interaction.
 - The library counter and equipment should be sanitised every hour.
 - Teachers should supervise children as they choose books to minimise touching books and other library equipment.
 - Fabric-based books, or books made with material that is difficult to clean should be restricted.
 - All used books must be placed in a clearly labeled container for sanitisation before re-use.
 - ECCs are encouraged to laminate books for ease of cleaning and sanitisation.
 - Library equipment must be sanitised after every use.
 - Children must not share equipment.
 - A book drop-off container should be designated and clearly labeled.

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